



Republican Policy Committee

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Was that 'Triangulation' or 'Strangulation'?

The President: Ending Welfare 'Reform' As We Know It

President Clinton's position on welfare reform has been hard to follow. He campaigned on "ending welfare as we know it," but once elected, sent Congress a bill that merely spent more money to preserve the status quo. Now he admits that his welfare bill was "soft and weak." To confuse things even more, the President praised the Republican welfare bill that passed the Senate and said he would sign it into law. But now, according to White House officials, he is rethinking his support for a Republican welfare bill, even though he has not even seen the bill — it's still in conference.

The term currently in vogue at the White House for all this double talk and indecision is 'triangulation.' Simply put, triangulation is an attempt by President Clinton to be neither this nor that, to be neither here nor there. The one big problem with triangulation, however, is that, Bill Clinton can't even be Bill Clinton.

Candidate Clinton on His Welfare Plan —

"We need real welfare reform. . . I recommend, number one, that you require people to take jobs."

[Candidate Clinton, May 6, 1992]

"And I have a plan to do even better, to end welfare as we know it . . ."

[Candidate Clinton, August 12, 1992]

The 'Triangular' President —

"[Syndicated columnist Ben] Wattenberg said Clinton told him he 'wasn't pleased' with his own welfare program and agreed it was 'soft and weak.' He [Clinton] expressed support

for the far tougher Senate welfare reform bill now in Congress, legislation some liberal Democratic senators are trying to get Clinton to abandon.”
[*Washington Post*, November 2, 1995]

President Clinton on the Senate Welfare Reform bill —

“President Clinton, who campaigned on a pledge ‘end welfare as we know it,’ **signaled his support for the Senate [welfare] bill**, but warned against making too many compromises with the House.”
[*Washington Post*, September 20, 1995]

“... Mr. Clinton **praised the welfare overhaul efforts of Senate Republicans.**...”
[*New York Times*, September 19, 1995]

“Author Ben Wattenberg, who recently discussed welfare reform with Clinton in a widely reported conversation, said Clinton told him he has gotten memos from such people as Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.) and Marian Wright Edelman, head of the Children’s Defense Fund, ‘and all this pressure, but he [Clinton] **is not going to cave in and intends to stick with the Senate version.**’”
[*Chicago Tribune*, November 5, 1995]

The ‘Triangular’ President on the Senate Welfare Reform bill —

“Deputy press secretary Ginny Terzano said Clinton **always has had reservations about the Senate [welfare reform] bill** and would not sign it unless those concerns were answered by the legislation.”
[*Chicago Tribune*, November 5, 1995]

“President Clinton has privately told acquaintances that he is taking ‘huge heat’ from some Democrats to reverse course and veto a stringent GOP welfare reform package and is **‘rethinking’ his final demands for acceptable legislation**, administration officials said yesterday.”
[*Washington Post*, November 4, 1995]

“... A senior administration official said yesterday, **‘I’m not sure the president is comfortable with his position on that [the Senate welfare bill]. ...’** The official said it was difficult to see how the president could make those issues [the president’s second-term agenda] priorities and still sign a Republican welfare bill, even the Senate version.”
[*Washington Post*, November 4, 1995]

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